

1952

REPORT ON HISTORICAL INVESTIGATION  
OF WOUNDED KNEE BATTLEFIELD SITE,  
PINE. RIDGE INDIAN RESERVATION,  
SOUTH DAKOTA

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INDIAN RESERVATION, SOUTH DAKOTA

By Merrill J. Mattes  
Regional Historian  
Region Two Office  
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October 3, 1952



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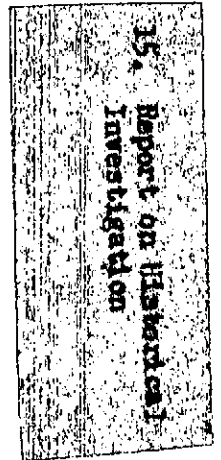


Table of Contents

	<u>Page</u>
I. Introduction	1
A. Background of Proposal	1
B. Synopsis	2
C. Field Investigation	4
II. Critical Analysis of the Site	15
A. Identification of Site	15
B. Description	15
C. Bibliography	18
D. Historical Narrative	21
E. Controversial Aspects of Wounded Knee	30
III. Park Data	41
A. Ownership	41
B. Appraised Value	41
C. Condition of Lands	41
D. Accessibility	42
E. Suggested Development	42
F. Relation to National Park Service Areas	42
G. Related Historic Sites	44
IV. Maps and Photographs	45
V. Conclusions	57

REPORT ON HISTORICAL INVESTIGATION OF  
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I. Introduction

A. Background of Proposal

In April 1952, the National Park Service was requested by Representative A. Y. Berry of South Dakota, to consider the possibility of giving national recognition to Wounded Knee Battlefield, on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation of South Dakota. Limited data on the battlefield was presented on April 22 to the Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings, and Monuments. The Board asked that a field investigation and report be made by the Service to secure more comprehensive data. The Region Two office was requested to conduct this investigation by a note appended to Mr. Tolson's letter of May 9 to Senator Karl E. Mundt.

Senator Mundt and Senator Francis Case joined Representative Berry in expressing interest in giving the site recognition. Over forty names of South Dakota citizens were supplied by them, with the suggestion that they be contacted by the investigator.

No specific acreage of ground was mentioned, and no particular type of designation was advocated by the Congressmen. However, the terms "national battlefield," "national monument,"

and "national historic site" all crop up in the preliminary correspondence. To the knowledge of the Region Two Office, the National Park Service has not previously been requested to consider Wounded Knee for recognition, notwithstanding a reference by Senator Case in his letter of July 24, 1952, to Mr. Lloyd, to "what we had hoped for in preparing a national monument some years ago." Neither does it appear to have been investigated in connection with the Historic Sites Survey during its period of activity before World War II.

B. Synopsis

The "Battle of Wounded Knee" or "The Wounded Knee Massacre" is an event quite well known, one might say notorious, in the annals of the Western frontier, the name inspiring strong and conflicting emotions among latter-day students as well as among those personally related to the event by geography or group loyalties. There is an extensive bibliography of both scholarly and popular treatises on the subject, describing an affair of violence which, like the earlier Battle of the Little Big Horn, continues to reverberate with discordant overtones.

On December 29, 1890, some two to three hundred Dakota Sioux, men, women and children, and some thirty soldiers, principally of the 7th U.S. Cavalry, were slain at Wounded Knee in an engagement which marked the culmination of the "Messiah Craze" or "Ghost Dance War," or the "Sioux Outbreak." This tragedy has

achieved historical fame, partly because of the extraordinary number of fatalities, particularly among those normally considered non-combatants, and partly because it was the last important clash between North American Indians and white men.

Wounded Knee was not a pitched battle. It was largely a hand to hand melee, an explosion of tense nerves and long pent-up emotions touched off by a single irresponsible rifle shot. The Indians, including about 100 men, had surrendered to a military force of about 470 men. They had pitched camp together and the soldiers were in the process of relieving the reluctant Indians of their arms when the holocaust was suddenly ignited. It raged unchecked until most of the fleeing Indians were killed or disabled.

The terms "Messiah Craze" and "Ghost Dance War" are both misleading. True, the reservation was swept by a kind of religious hysteria, but only a part of the population was affected, and the religion embraced was peaceful, not warlike, in intent. True, there was a military campaign resulting in hostilities but there was no real war. Alarmed by the antics of the dancers, the Indian agent called for military aid; while the Indians, alarmed by the concentration of troops, first fled from them en masse; then sullenly returned to their homes. There were a few other minor actions, but the excitement would have caused only a ripple in the tides of history, if it had not been for the flare-up of

Wounded Knee. This served not only to focus national attention upon the immediate issues of the time, but it became the melodramatic finale to 400 years of racial conflict.

### C. Field Investigation

Extensive research on Wounded Knee was conducted in the Region Two Office and Omaha Public Libraries. Other data was obtained by microfilm from the National Archives, and from the Edward S. Luce Collection of 7th U.S. Cavalry Historical Data.

On June 18, enroute from Custer Battlefield to Omaha, I stopped at Pine Ridge to interview Mr. C. R. Sande, Superintendent of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, regarding the background of the proposal and the attitude of the Indians. From Mr. Sande, I gathered the following facts:

1. The impetus for the proposal came primarily from officials and members of the Chicago-Black Hills Highway Association who were interested in the site as a trans-continental tourist attraction.
2. The Indians residing on the Pine Ridge Reservation by and large were not acquainted with the proposal, but a few who were acquainted with it were rather cool to the idea.
3. There was some difference of opinion locally as to how the approach roads to the area should be handled.



4. There was some rivalry among the different Indian bands over the traditional rights to holdings at the Wounded Knee Battlefield site.

5. There were still many survivors of the battle and, understandably enough, feeling was still rather high. In this connection, Mr. Sande suggested that it might be premature to establish a monument, but the Indians should be consulted.

On the morning of the 19th I drove to the Battlefield site, 17 miles from the agency, to reconnoitre the area and to obtain photographs with a Crown Graphic camera.

Having ascertained whence came the main impetus for the proposal we corresponded with Mr. J. E. Steger of Hot Springs, South Dakota, Executive Secretary of the Association, suggesting that the Regional Historian meet at some convenient place and time with him and numerous others who had expressed an interest, as an alternative to the Regional Historian touring South Dakota and conducting about 40 separate interviews. This plan also had the advantage of bringing various and probably conflicting or at least incongruous ideas out into the open for discussion, thus aiding us in solving what promised to be a quite complicated and delicate investigational problem.

Mr. Steger concurred in this plan, and suggested that a public meeting be held at Pine Ridge at 10 A.M. on July 29.

By telephone Mr. Sande concurred in this plan and arranged that the meeting be held in the American Legion Hall. Accordingly, notices were mimeographed and distributed by us to the various individuals whose names had been supplied us. Letters of invitation were also directed to Senators Case and Mundt and Representative Berry.

I arrived at Pine Ridge the evening of July 28, remaining there through the 30th. At the appointed hour I arrived at the Legion Hall to find a substantial gathering. At my suggestion, Mr. Sande presided. The meeting lasted until noon, then was adjourned for lunch, and resumed at 1 P.M., lasting until 3:30 P.M. The numbers in attendance, as well as the length of the meeting, testify to the intensity of local interest in the proposal. There were at least forty people, about half Indian and half white present, but only 30 of them signed an attendance register. Communities represented included Pine Ridge, Wounded Knee, Martin, Denby, Hot Springs, Custer, Rapid City, and Pierre, South Dakota.

A verbatim transcription of the proceedings was taken by an agency stenographer. In the interest of democratic procedure everybody was invited to speak their mind and nearly everybody did. However, since much of the "testimony" was either repetitious or not actually germane to the subject of inquiry, I submit only a condensed summary of significant highlights:

Regional Historian Mattes explained the neutral role of the National Park Service, the object being to gather historical data and obtain the views of all concerned before completing a report for the consideration of the Advisory Board. The various categories of historical areas and their statutory bases were mentioned.

William Fire Thunder, Secretary of the Oglala Sioux Tribal Council, spoke on behalf of the Wounded Knee Survivor's Association, a group of actual survivors and descendants of non-survivors who have organized for the purpose of securing compensation for losses and injuries sustained at Wounded Knee. They expressed four objections or qualms about the proposal:

- (1) A great wrong was perpetrated, and it is feared that establishment of a historic site would jeopardize the pending claims.
- (2) They object to use of the term "battlefield" since they regard the affair as a "massacre."
- (3) Original reservation lands have sadly dwindled, and they fear further encroachments, such as the withdrawal of a large block of land for a historic site.
- (4) As the result of previous observations and experience, they fear that any concession rights that might go with establishment of a park might go to outsiders rather than to themselves.

Diligent efforts were made by various parties to dispose of all of these objections. As to point 1, see Senator

Case below. As to point 2, this is crucial in the interpretation of the historical data and could not, of course, be settled at the meeting. (Practically all present were, of course, either Indians or Indian sympathizers, so the "massacre" viewpoint was dominant.) As to point 3, I explained that this was not a plot to acquire more Government land at the expense of the Indians, that in fact, the proposal did not originate with the Government, and that in any event, if perchance a site were established, the acreage involved would be the minimum necessary to properly interpret the site. As to point 4, I explained that this apprehension too was premature but that, if anything materialized, Indian prerogatives would surely be recognized within their own reservation.

Joe E. Steger, representing Chicago-Black Hills Highway Association stated that his group was organized in 1946 and sought only the best interests of communities living along U.S. Highway 18, which, by tying in with State Highway 50, took tourists from Sioux City to the Black Hills via the new Fort Randall Dam and the Rosebud and Pine Ridge Reservation, advertised as "the Indian Country." Wounded Knee was a notable historic event, and the site should be given national recognition "so that the American people will want to visit it." A corollary of this proposition is that the present poor road of 8 miles from U.S. 18 to Wounded Knee be improved so that "the American people can visit it." He felt

that creation of a historic site would be of benefit to the Indians in every way.

U. S. Senator Francis Case, the only Congressman present, spoke at length on the delicate relationship of the claims to creation of a historic site. Since the 75th Congress he has sponsored bills to provide \$1,000 cash indemnity to each victim of Wounded Knee, and his or her survivors. Thus far, the move has not been successful due to indifference or lack of interest in some quarters, opposition in others; but there is still hope. He felt strongly that the affair was a massacre rather than a battle, the 7th Cavalry being motivated by revenge for the Custer affair. He expressed the thought that creation of a historic site would be quite fitting to memorialize the victims, and to commemorate the event, which is of national significance as the last fight on the American continent between red men and white, and symbolic of the Indian's longing for independence or a return to the old way of life as symbolized by the "Ghost Dance." He did not believe that a historic site should be regarded as a substitute for indemnification, but rather that its creation would focus public and Congressional attention on the matter, and perhaps enhance the prospects for indemnification.

Mr. Duane McDowell, representing Senator Mundt, and Mr. Dean W. Leonard representing Representative Berry expressed general approbation of Senator Case's viewpoint.

Bob Lee, reporter for the Rapid City Daily Journal, who has written some caustic articles and is now writing a book about the "massacre," felt that national recognition "would help to bring the truth out into the open." Will H. Spindler, Government teacher at the Wounded Knee day school, who has written brochures on the subject, believed likewise. I interjected the thought here that historians frequently were not in agreement on what constituted historical truth, that numerous details of the Wounded Knee affair were still highly controversial, and that the act of creating a monument or historic site would not of itself guarantee the universal acceptance of one viewpoint as "the truth."

Despite previous reassurances, apprehension concerning the proposal were voiced by James Red Cloud, son of the famous warrior; Charles Blind Man and Dora High White Man, both actual survivors. All spoke in the Sioux language, Fire Thunder interpreting. Matthew High Pine, who owns grazing land at Wounded Knee, also was concerned. None objected to the proposal itself, as long as their tribal or personal interests would be protected.

Expressions definitely favorable to creation of a historic site were voiced by Mrs. Rose Ecoffey, representing Gold Star Mothers, Mrs. Ethel Merrival, member of Oglala Sioux Council, and Charles Under Baggage, President of the Council.

Will G. Robinson, Secretary of the South Dakota State Historical Society, echoed the sentiment that Wounded Knee was a national disgrace. However, he felt that there was no point in perpetuating the controversial aspects, and that we might as well be realistic and understand that the Government will not be interested in establishing a monument to "the guilt of the U.S. Army." However, the site could well be presented as a "national memorial" to commemorate the lamentably slain, both Indians and soldiers, to interpret the event utilizing only undisputed facts, and to memorialize the Indians, our late foes, who gave their lives for the United States in World Wars I and II and Korea.

The political and historical aspects of the case having been explored, I suggested that an effort be made by the group to formulate a concrete proposal, specifying the type and extent of the historical area.

My thought as to the possibility of a national historic site by cooperative agreement with private or tribal owners met with little enthusiasm. Senator Case said he would favor any proposition that appeared to promise success, but Mr. Steger seemed to voice the sentiments of the group when he said that the area should be in full federal ownership, developed and interpreted by the National Park Service just like Custer Battlefield. It seemed immaterial to Mr. Steger and others what the site was called, just so it was in federal ownership.

This brought up the problem of land acquisition. I indicated that purchase of any land by the Government would be a formidable obstacle whereupon Mr. Clive Gildersleeve, storekeeper and postmaster at Wounded Knee arose to announce that he owned a portion of the main battlefield area and would be happy to donate whatever of his land was needed; and that the Catholic Church owned the other part, and could probably be prevailed upon to donate likewise, most of the land in question being of little practical value. Senator Case declared that this was probably the most important development of the meeting, since land acquisition would not now be an obstacle.

At my request Mr. Sande appointed a committee to meet me at the Agency office on the following morning to examine the battlefield terrain in the light of historical maps available in reports by the Bureau of American Ethnology and the Secretary of War (see Maps) so that tentative boundaries for the proposed area could be drawn up on an intelligent and historically accurate basis. The appointees consisted of Clive Gildersleeve, Father Fuller (Superior of Holy Rosary Mission, Pine Ridge Educational Society), and Matthew High Pine, all having vested interests in the land; Charles Blind Man, representing the Wounded Knee Survivor's Association; and William Fire Thunder, representing the Oglala Sioux Tribal Council. On the following day this group was augmented voluntarily by Will H. Spindler, previously mentioned, and Jake Herman and Samuel Stands, officers of the Tribal Council.



On July 30, after preparing a land ownership map with the aid of Frank A. Stoldt, tribal interpreter, I drove the group to the battlefield. Blind Man gave a vivid account of the affair as he remembered it at age 9, conceding that, as the result of the confusion resulting from gun smoke and screams, he could throw little light on the details. He was not injured for his mother did not flee with the others. His version of the location of the council and various camp sites agreed entirely with the historical maps.

The "committee" reached general agreement on the minimum area that should be included in the proposal: twenty acres embracing the camps and the principal action. Mr. Gildersleeve repeated his offer to donate five of his 40 acres, while Father Fuller seemed to feel that it would be no problem to induce the Pine Ridge Educational Society to relinquish 15 of their 40. Certain adjoining lands, such as the dry ravine up which the women and children fled, while actually part of the battlefield, could conceivably be covered by scenic easement or cooperative agreement. At least the group felt this would be a happy solution.

After obtaining additional photographs with a 616 Kodak, I returned to the agency, where I obtained more land and road data, and interviewed various individuals including tribal councilmen, and some who were eyewitnesses of the battle. On July 31, I traveled to Rapid City to visit other informants, and thence to Pierre. On the following morning, I discussed the matter at length with State Historian

Robinson, who had refined his ideas on the subject, and handed me a memorandum suggesting an area of about 30 acres, with the following treatment:

- "(1) That the area to be devoted to whatever commemorative idea is finally agreed upon should encompass about the area described above.
- (2) That such area be enclosed in a strong fence. (But that only auto gates be placed in the fence so that the present road net would not be disturbed.)
- (3) That the location of the various elements, troops, artillery, council area, Indian camp, cavalry camp, disposition of troops, etc., be marked with suitable bronze, aluminum or stone markers of a very permanent nature.
- (4) That at or near the main entrance a suitable monument, not necessarily large but of a permanent character be erected.
- (5) That on this marker should appear:
  - (1) The names of all the soldier dead.
  - (2) That the names of all Indian dead ascertainable together with such an appellation as brave, old man, woman, boy, girl.
  - (3) That the simple story of what is undisputed fact be told on this same monument."

Whereas the field investigation involved contact almost exclusively with those who were of the "massacre" school, it should be emphasized that this reporter endeavored and did manage to gather a considerable body of testimony, from manuscripts in the 7th Cavalry Collection, and printed reports of the War Department, giving the reverse or "battle" interpretation.

## II. Critical Analysis of the Site

### A. Identification of Site

Wounded Knee Battlefield lies near the center of the SW $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 36, T 37 N, R 43 W, of the 6th Principal Meridian. The precise location of the battle is clearly defined on two published maps sketched by eyewitnesses. One, compiled by Lt. T. Q. Donaldson, 7th U.S. Cavalry appears on Plate XCVII, 14th Annual Report, Bureau of American Ethnology 1892-93. The other, by Lt. S. A. Clorian, Acting Engineer Officer, Division of the Missouri, appears opposite page 154, Vol. I, of the Annual Report of the Secretary of War, 1891 (see Maps). The bend in Wounded Knee Creek, the dry ravine, the hill and other topographic features so depicted are unmistakably identical with the site contained within the present Wounded Knee community. The mass grave, dug following the massacre, is prominently evident (see Photo 4), and local residents report having found numerous battlefield relics in years past.

### B. Description

Two panoramic photographs (Nos. 1 and 2 appended) illustrate the situation at the site today. The low flat where soldiers and Indians were camped, and where the initial heavy action took place, bears evidence of intensive grazing, but is not marred by any intrusive structures. The Creek follows the same meanders it did 60 years ago, and the fatal ravine winds away into a barren hillside with nothing to impair a visual reconstruction of the pursuit except one or two barbed wire fences. The hill where the four Hotchkiss guns were deployed

and where most of the Indian victims were hastily buried en masse, still dominates the scene. A picturesque Catholic mission has since been erected on this hill, but it does not seem to violate the historic scene. Rather, it seems to serve as a fitting monument to spiritual values which still survive the horrors of Indian warfare.

Behind the Church is a small cemetery, which is used today for the interment of parishioners. In its center is the mass grave. This is approximately 8 feet wide and 80 feet long, outlined by a concrete strip. At one end is a white wooden cross 12 feet high. Alongside the trench is a gray granite monument 9 feet high with concrete base erected June 17, 1930. The south side contains the following inscription:

"This monument is erected by surviving relatives and other Ogallala and Cheyenne River Sioux Indians in Memory of the Chief Big Foot Massacre Dec. 29, 1890  
Col. Forsyth in command of U.S. Troops.  
Big Foot was a great chief of the Sioux Indians. He often said "I will stand in peace till my last day comes." He did many good and brave deeds for the white man and the red man. Many innocent women and children who knew no wrong died here.

"June 17, 1930 The erecting of this monument is largely due to the financial assistance of Joseph Horncloud whose father was killed here."

The other three sides list the names of 44 of the Indian warriors killed here. Evidence of an official count of the corpses has not been found. Eastman states that 146 victims are buried here, including 84 men and boys, 44 women and 18 small children. (It is known that many of the

slain were taken from the field for private burial by relatives, while those who died of wounds at Pine Ridge were buried there.) The grave is kept in decent condition by the survivors and interested residents. While there in June I found the grave adorned with several small bouquets of flowers.

At the time of fight, there were a few small buildings in the immediate vicinity, including the "Wounded Knee Post Office" which Blind Man referred to as "Red Iron's Store," and a few Indian cabins. These have all disappeared, but today there are numerous structures comprising the Wounded Knee community, consisting of three churches, two schools, the Wounded Knee store and post office, and several residences. These are scattered around the valley. None of these structures seem to infringe seriously upon the historic scene. The impression gained from a distance is that of a peaceful pleasant valley with nothing but the grave monument to suggest the desolation and the horror evident in the historic photographs appended to this report.

Wounded Knee is 17 miles by road from Pine Ridge, involving 9 miles by paved U. S. Highway 18, and 8 miles by a thinly graveled section line road. Unsurfaced roads also lead from Wounded Knee to Batesland east of U. S. 18, and to the interior communities of Percupine, Kyle, and Manderson (see Maps).

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#### D. Historical Narrative

The rather impressive extent of Wounded Knee literature is indicated in the foregoing bibliography. Obviously the whole story cannot be brought within the confines of this report, particularly since so much of it involves an exhaustive search for the thread of truth in the tangled skein of controversy. Our scheme, therefore, is to present here a highly condensed summary of events leading up to, and the generally accepted facts of, the encounter, followed by a review of points which are controversial and which this reporter will not attempt to arbitrate.

Victory at the Little Big Horn was followed by a succession of defeats, and several principal bands of Teton Dakota Sioux returned to their respective reservations -- the Oglala (Crazy Horse's and Red Cloud's people) to Pine Ridge, the Brules (Spotted Tail's people) to Rosebud, the Two Kettle, Sans Arc and Minniconjou at Cheyenne River and the Blackfoot Sioux and Hunkpapas (Sitting Bull's people) at Standing Rock. Although many recognized that survival depended upon adjustment to a white man's civilization, this was an extremely difficult and painful, almost impossible, process for those used to the nomadic buffalo-hunting scalp-lifting culture of the Great Plains. Rather than degrade himself by trudging behind a plow, the onetime warrior sat in the sun and dreamed of a miraculous return to his former glory. Thus he was ripe for the message of Wovoka, a Nevada Paiute, who promised the advent of just such a miracle, not by war

but by invocation of the Great Spirit through the Ghost dance (Mooney, 764-815). During the winter of 1889 delegates from the Sioux visited this new messiah, returning in April 1890, with glowing reports. Despite remonstrances of the agent at Pine Ridge, Ghost dancing then became the vogue. There was no visible harm or threat in this, there was no actual "outbreak" or rebellion, but the agent became agitated by all the excitement, coupled with rumors of an outbreak, and he called for help (Letters, BIA). The War Department, summoned by the President to assume military responsibility to prevent an outbreak, responded with alacrity.

While the Ghost dance was largely blamed for what followed, it was merely a symptom of a deep-seated unrest stemming from immediate local grievances. In his report of 1891, Commissioner Morgan of Indian Affairs lists no less than twelve "causes of the outbreak" leading to Wounded Knee (CIA, 132-135), which may be boiled down thusly: (1) a cantankerous mood among the warriors attendant upon the decay of the old life; (2) reduction in the size of the reservation without fulfillment of governmental promises; (3) hunger, resulting partly from arbitrary curtailment of government rations and partly from drouth and other natural disasters; (4) an onslaught of measles and other diseases, highly fatal among the children, strengthening an attitude of defiance; (5) the sudden and seemingly unprovoked invasion by the military, frightening the Indians; (6) the twin beliefs prevalent

among the more fanatical Ghost-dancers that supremacy of the Indian race would soon be revived, and that their "ghost-shirts" would be invulnerable to bullets.

Of the 26,000 Sioux estimated for 1890, probably 10,000 lived in the contiguous Pine Ridge and Rosebud Reservations and, although discontent and Ghost-dancing was rife on other reservations as well, it was here that the threat seemed most serious, and the agent Royer (a new political appointee), became the most alarmed. It was here therefore that the Army converged in greatest force and pressure rapidly built up to the boiling point.

On November 17 troops under General John R. Brooke were ordered to advance upon Pine Ridge. On the 19th, the first contingent arrived from Fort Robinson, Nebraska, and were rapidly reinforced. By the time Brooke arrived on November 30, a heavy concentration of forces had converged upon Pine Ridge, including eight troops of the 7th Cavalry under Colonel James W. Forsyth. At the same time, substantial forces were dispatched to the other reservations until, by the admission of Major General Schofield, commanding the Army, "nearly one-half of the infantry and cavalry of the Army, and some artillery," were concentrated upon the Sioux Reservations, "for which purpose it was necessary to bring troops from nearly all parts of the country west of the 'Mississippi River'" (SW, 55). This iron ring, "having mainly in view the protection of extended settlements surrounding

the Sioux Reservation against destruction by hostile Indians," was under the control of General Nelson A. Miles, Commander, Military Department of the Missouri, the conqueror of Geronimo, Chief Joseph, and Sitting Bull.

With the appearance of the troops, some 3000 erstwhile Ghost-dancers, led by Short Bull and Kicking Bear, fled to the Badland's northwest of White River. This further widened the chasm of misunderstanding for, despite alarms to the contrary, this was not a hostile movement, but a stampede caused by panic; while neither was the advance of the troops, properly speaking, a hostile movement, for they came only at the urgent insistence of the Indian agent, and with no plan in mind save to preserve law and order.

During the forepart of December there were no appreciable clashes between soldiers and Indians. Things seemed to be quieting down, and it was adjudged by the military to be an auspicious time to remove and incarcerate the most conspicuous of the agitators. Prominent among these was Sitting Bull, the famous irreconcilable antagonist, who was alleged to be fomenting rebellion at his camp on Grand River, some 40 miles from Fort Yates, the Standing Rock Agency. On December 15, in an attempt by Indian police to arrest the old chief, Sitting Bull and 9 followers, and 6 of the police were killed. When cavalry reinforcements rode up, many of Sitting Bull's band fled southward toward Cheyenne River (Mooney, 854-864; McLaughlin, 194-222). This was the grim prelude to Wounded Knee.

With the news of Sitting Bull's demise, the Oglala and Brule Sioux in the Badlands seemed to understand which way the wind blew, and they started to drift sullenly but without hostile action back toward Pine Ridge Agency. The danger zone now seemed to be in the Cheyenne River Reservation where Sitting Bull's malcontents were joining up with Ghost-dancers Hump and Big Foot, both chiefs having a following of around 400 each. Hump, considered to be the greatest threat, came into Fort Bennett meek as a lamb through the intercession of his old friend, Captain E. P. Ewers of the 5th Infantry, and the majority of the Sitting Bull refugees were likewise induced to come in peacefully. About fifty, however, joined Big Foot.

Big Foot or Sitanka now became the problem child of the War Department (SW, 194-238). Lt. Col. E. V. Sumner was assigned the ticklish task of keeping watch on his village a few miles below the fork of Cheyenne River. On December 21, the band, numbering around 340, was induced to start toward Fort Bennett, but Big Foot protested the injustice of this move. Sumner, now ready to use force, was informed in the evening of December 22 that Big Foot's band had decamped southward toward the Badlands. It is believed that this flight was influenced by news that Sumner would soon be reinforced by Colonel Merriam, moving up from Fort Bennett, and rumors that the soldiers would use force. It is also apparent that Big Foot's plan was to reach Pine Ridge ahead of the troops, and seek the protection of the once powerful Chief Red Cloud (McGregor, 48).

Acting on orders to intercept Big Foot, Major Whitside of the 7th Cavalry came up with him at Porcupine Butte just west of the Badlands, demanded an unconditional surrender which was at once given, and on December 28, the Indians were escorted to Wounded Knee Creek, camping as directed. General Brooke at once sent Colonel Forsyth to join Major Whitside and assume command. The guard now consisted of 8 troops of the 7th Cavalry, 1 company of Cheyenne scouts, and 4 pieces of light artillery (Hotchkiss guns) with a total force of 470 men, against 106 warriors under Big Foot. Before his surrender, Big Foot had sent a scouting party on a futile search for Kicking Bear's camp in the Badlands. This group thus narrowly missed certain death. By this time Kicking Bear and the Pine Ridge fugitives had returned to the vicinity of that agency.

On December 29, preparations were made to disarm the Indians before escorting them to Pine Ridge and then by railroad out of the territory. This was a most unwise and fatal error, for the Indians had shown no inclination to fight, while on the other hand they regarded their guns as their means of livelihood, and their most cherished possessions. Between the Indian tipis, where a white flag was hoisted, and the soldier's tents, was the council ring. On the rise was posted the battery trained directly on the Indian camp. The troops were posted in two cordons, one immediately surrounding the council ring, the other at a distance of four hundred yards.

The warriors did not comply readily with the request for disarmament, so a detachment of troops was sent to search the tipis, returning with about 40 rifles, mostly in poor condition. Now tension mounted, for in the search, the soldiers found it necessary to overturn furniture and discommode women and children; while on the other hand the officers became concerned that the Indians still concealed firearms. Meanwhile a medicine-man had been circling among the braves, blowing on an eagle-whistle, allegedly urging resistance and reminding them of their invulnerable ghost-shirts. The searchers now attempted to search the warriors. Suddenly the medicine man threw a handful of dust in the air, a young Indian drew out his rifle and it was discharged (either accidentally or on purpose), and the soldiers instantly replied with a volley into the mass of assembled warriors. A brief, but frightful, hand to hand struggle ensued, with rifle, knife, revolver, and war club all wielded murderously.

At the first signal the Hotchkiss guns trained on the camp opened fire, dealing havoc among the women and children, there gathered to observe the proceedings. In a few moments over 50 soldiers and 200 Indians, men, women, and children, were lying dead or wounded on the ground, the tipis were burning, and Indian survivors were running in panic to the shelter of the ravine, pursued by the soldiers and followed up by a raking fire from the Hotchkiss gun. The bodies of women and children were found scattered along a distance of two miles from the scene of the encounter.

News of the struggle quickly reached General Brooke at Pine Ridge and the thousands of Indians there encamped lately returned from the Badlands. The latter, aroused to a frenzy, assumed a hostile attitude. One band of Brules menaced the troops at Wounded Knee and rescued some fugitives, while another band under Two Strikes attacked the Agency itself, being repulsed by Indian police, and then withdrawing to a position on White Clay Creek. Meanwhile, the 7th Cavalry loaded wounded troops and Indians on wagons and painfully made their way back to Pine Ridge where mission buildings were turned into hospitals. On the following day, December 30, hostiles attacked an Army supply train near the Agency, and were later engaged by troops at the Drexel Mission, five miles north of Pine Ridge, with minor casualties.

The soldier dead of Wounded Knee were transported and buried at the Agency, on the day of the battle. On New Years Day, 1891, following a blizzard, a detachment of troops was sent to Wounded Knee to gather up and bury the Indian dead. The bodies covered with snow were found massed near the council ring and scattered along the river. Some women and children were found alive, but all badly wounded and frozen, and most of them soon died. A long trench was dug and the bodies, stripped of their ghost-shirts by souvenir-hunters, were arranged like sardines in the pit. There were no funeral services, no ceremony of any kind. A year later Mooney (879) found that the Indians had erected a wire fence around the trench and smeared the posts with sacred red medicine paint.



All symptoms of Indian hostility swiftly collapsed after Wounded Knee. Convinced that resistance was hopeless and impressed by the friendly overtures of General Miles and the persuasion of friendly chiefs, all Indians involved in the "outbreak" had surrendered by January 16. The tension was markedly relieved by the replacement of civilian agents by respected Army officers, and the early appropriation by Congress of funds to carry out previously ignored treaty obligations.

The military campaign in western South Dakota had lasted 32 days at a total expense of some \$1,200,000. Total casualties are described as three officers and 28 enlisted men killed, four officers and 38 enlisted men wounded, of which Wounded Knee contributed one officer and 24 soldiers killed, and two officers and 32 men wounded. The Indian loss cannot be accurately computed, but it appears that well over 300 Indians died during the hostilities, at least 250, including the women and children receiving mortal wounds at Wounded Knee (Mooney, 891-892).

### E. Controversial Aspects of Wounded Knee

It is not possible to appraise the national significance of Wounded Knee on the basis of stark, undisputed facts alone. We must consider briefly the numerous controversial elements, not with the view of sitting in a court of moral judgment, but in order to discern clearly the two distinct and violently opposed schools of thought, and the difficulties involved in attempting to ascertain "all the facts" of a situation colored by an emotional rainbow.

It might be safely stated that an unbiased account of Wounded Knee is an impossibility, for any statement one makes is apt to imply a moral judgment which will be swiftly pounced upon by advocates of the side impugned. Finally, since all honest men are unalterably opposed to bloodshed, and there was plenty of it at Wounded Knee, all men (including historians!) when exposed to the subject seem promptly to take a resolute stand against somebody involved in the fracas.

The Indians and their sympathizers (who apparently constitute the heavy majority of interested citizens) regard Wounded Knee as a massacre, incident to an unwarranted invasion of their reservation by the United States Army, not necessarily premeditated, but at least the result of flagrant mishandling and an inflammatory predisposition on the part of the troops, and perpetrated with a gusto and a lack of discrimination as to age or sex which circumstances hardly seemed to warrant. The Army and its adherents represent the affair as a more or less pitched battle precipitated treacherously and wantonly by the

Indians, a chapter in a full scale Indian war, in which the troops acquitted themselves with valor, if not with courtesy. "The truth" of the matter is lost somewhere in the chasm separating these two versions, not necessarily in the middle.

In the first place, was there an actual uprising of hostile Indians? The marked unrest caused by mounting grievances coupled with the frenzy of the ghost-dancers suggested to the agents the threat of an outbreak, but no outbreak actually occurred. Rumors coupled with horrendous notions of the Sioux temperament fed a panic among the nearby settlements, but after the dust settled it was found that no settlers were killed, scalped, or in any way molested (Colby; Mooney, 892). The Sioux never left their reservations.

The military accounts are replete with the term "hostiles" but most writers agree that the initial movement of several thousand Indians to the Badlands was simply a stampede caused by panic at the appearance of massed troops. Similarly, Big Foot's retreat from Cheyenne River is represented in dispatches as a move to "join the hostiles" in the Badlands, but civilian writers point out that Big Foot, fearing violence or at least captivity from the military, was seeking asylum among fellow refugees and, failing that, to accept the hospitality of Red Cloud at Pine Ridge.

Writing in the same volume, Schofield and Miles contradict each other on the size of the Sioux threat. The former consider that

"no considerable number of them had seriously intended to engage in hostilities against the United States," while the latter report has it that as a result of "the conspiracy" eight states "were liable to be overrun by a hungry wild mad horde of savages" (SW, 55, 144). Practically all of the accounts agree that hostilities that did take place followed the pressure of tightening cordon tactics of the troops, and at no time except immediately after Wounded Knee did the Indians initiate hostilities. Then where was "the war?" Eastman (34) and Watson allege that it was an invention of "war correspondents" who were sent in droves to Pine Ridge by big Eastern dailies, whose readers thirsted for gory details.

There is a slight discrepancy in the picture we get of Big Foot. He was a very surly and treacherous Indian (McCormick). He was wise, mild-mannered, peaceful, devoid of warlike spirit (McGregor, 15). There is general agreement that, throughout December 29, he was flat on his back, being seriously ill with pneumonia before the fight, and riddled with bullets thereafter.

Big Foot's band of some 300 men, women, and children are pictured by McCormick as desperadoes, a band of fanatics, inflamed to the point of insanity by religious zeal, who stubbornly refused to cooperate with Forsyth's demands. McGregor (73) describes them as poor bewildered people, cold, hungry, and fatigued, whose every word and act was one of peace and submission. He points out that if Big Foot had the remotest

idea of fighting he could have done so to great advantage at Porcupine Butte. Also, it was not customary for Indians to involve their families in hand to hand combat with superior armed forces.

Most agree that Big Foot surrendered readily enough to Whitsi and bivouacked peacefully enough at Wounded Knee crossing. What happened on the morning of December 29? With over 400 surviving eyewitnesses one would think that a coherent account would emerge. There was a parole involving the total surrender of weapons, and here is where the accounts go off in all directions. Most agree that the Indians were reluctant to part with their guns, but they did stack up about 40 of them.

The surviving Indians unanimously claim that 40 guns were all they had and that they were relieved of all other weapons as well, including sharp-pointed utensils from the tipis (McGregor, 108-128) and Miles himself asserts that a personal search of 20 or more warriors just before the upheaval revealed no additional weapons (Eastman, 39). Most writers, even the quite sympathetic Mooney (869), accept the idea that the Indians either managed to retain some guns or grabbed some in a hurry from the stockpile, and also somehow had access to a few handy knives and warclubs. McCormick claims that the Indians had all kinds of guns and other lethal instruments, which had been mainly concealed under blankets, when the fight started.

Just what precipitated the disaster? Although Charley Blue Arm (McGregor, 137) reports that he did not hear a gun "before the big

crash came from the soldiers," most accounts agree that a single shot was fired by an Indian. Mooney (869) says, and Turning Hawk and Spotted Horse agree (CIA, 180) that a young Indian fired at the soldiers, and Father Craft is alleged to testify that "Indians fired first. The troops fired only when compelled to." However, others state that this shot was accidental, caused when two soldiers started scuffling with the Indian for possession of his gun, (Miles, in Eastman, 41), which Dewey Beard claims the Indian was starting to put down in the pile. Major Allen (Eastman, 41) says this first bullet went harmlessly into the stockpile of old guns.

Almost instantly after this first shot there was a thunderous blast of rifle fire, clouds of smoke and a general sprawling of bodies. This blast stands out vividly in the memory of the survivors (McGregor). Just before the blast there was a loud command, says Richard Afraid of Hawk. The soldiers seemed to have taken instantaneous action, without orders, says Major Allen (Eastman, 41). The big volley was from the soldiers, who must then have killed half of the concentrated warriors, says Mooney (869). "No," says McCormick, quoting Major Whitside, "the first volley was from the Indians, who fired at least 50 times before the troops retaliated"!

According to McCormick and Remington, soldiers testified that an old medicine man had been haranguing the Indians and that the tenor of his speech was that their ghost shirts were invulnerable to bullets, and that they could therefore resist the personal search with impunity.

When he stooped down and threw a handful of dust in the air, this was recognized by an officer as a hostile gesture and became the signal for general shooting by the Indians. Mooney (868-69) identifies the medicine man as Yellow Bird, and accepts the story of his action, but holds to the belief that only one irresponsible Indian fired upon this signal before the soldiers' valley. If, however, as Miles and Allen have it (Eastman, 41) this lone shot was the accidental result of a scuffle, then of course there would be no room for a fatal "signal" by Yellow Bird. Eastman scoffs at the whole idea, pointing out that the women and children, who were no ghost shirts, were under the muzzles of the Hotchkiss guns, and asserting that, if indeed there was a harangue and a dust-throwing, it must have been an invocation for supernatural aid, which was misunderstood or distorted by the interpreter. The numerous Indian witnesses (McGregor) mention no medicine man.

In any event, bloody chaos ensued with all available guns, including the Hotchkiss machine gun on the hill, going into action. It is incontrovertible that most of the 300 Indians and about 60 of about 400 soldiers were killed or wounded. Over half of the Indian warriors and practically all of the soldier casualties were stacked up around the council ring. Corpses of other warriors and the old men, women, and children were found within the wider radius of the camp, and along the ravine (see Maps), up which non-combatants were pursued and slain for a distance of two miles. With so much blood spilled in a struggle between forces so unevenly matched, several neat moral issues (not normally eligible for consideration in open warfare) arise. The

principal issues concern the treatment of women and children. Here is where chasm between the two interpretations is widest.

Mooney (870), who in every respect tries hard to be impartial, finds the Indians responsible for the engagement because the first shot was fired by one of their number, and justifies the answering volley by the soldiers. He defends Colonel Forsyth from charges of inhumanity, and "in justice to a brave regiment" points out that many of the troops were raw recruits who had never been under fire, who were maddened by the spectacle of their comrades' death, and were "probably unable in the confusion to distinguish between men and women by their dress." However he finds that "the wholesale slaughter of women and children was unnecessary and inexcusable. There can be no question that the pursuit was simply a massacre." General Miles (Eastman, 41) acknowledged that "a massacre occurred." The heavy majority of writers side with Miles, Mooney, McGregor, and the Indian survivors in agreeing that this part of "the battle" at least was "a massacre" (Vestal, 305; Wellman, 237, South Dakota Guide, 343). Some, while avoiding the guilt-laden word itself, clearly imply a massacre by such phrases as "hunted out like animals and shot" (Frink, 6). At least one writer (Lee) refers to the "Wounded Knee Crime." One corollary incident was noted, tending to bolster the moral indignation of the "massacre" school. Some Indian wounded were left to die in the field in zero weather.

According to the 7th Cavalrymen, the then Secretary of War, and the U.S. Army officially, there was no massacre. There was a battle



precipitated by the treachery of the Indians. Women and children were killed, regrettably, but unavoidably.

McCormick, historian for the 7th Cavalry, differs with the standard accounts at almost every turn, (and offers details that are not supported by other known sources). He infers, in the first place, that treachery was premeditated by the band as a whole, stating that during the council the squaws were furtively saddling ponies, hitching teams, etc., and that "at the first shot the squaws leaped in the wagons and drove out of their village," being followed by their men. Thereupon "three troops mounted and set out at a gallop, and a running fight took place with these Indian bucks for two or three miles." Women and children were killed only because of their proximity to the struggle with the men. Many (continues McCormick) were killed by the Indians themselves when they fired their initial volley, with unfortunate consequences to the latter. Contrary to all other accounts, which have the Hotchkiss guns mowing down the camp at once, McCormick states that they did not open up until the battle was well under way. "All wounded Indians were given the best attention possible and taken with us to the agency."

Crucial to an understanding of the affair, and pertinent to the question of military judgment, is the puzzle of the dead and wounded soldiers. The survivors (McGregor) insist that the Indians were relieved of all weapons, including guns as well as instruments, sharp or blunt, and claim that these soldiers were killed accidentally by the excitement

of their comrades, particularly in the first volley when soldiers were ringed closely around the warriors. Most historians take it for granted that the Indians had some weapons which they must have used freely. They conceivably managed to retain a few weapons in spite of the search, and possibly grabbed a few from the stockpile. However, there seems to be strong expert backing for the Indians contention that soldiers killed each other. Captain C. S. Ilsley, Captain Allyn Capron, Assistant Surgeon Charles B. Ewing (McGregor, 94-95) and General Miles (Eastman, 39) are all quoted to the effect that the troops were improperly disposed, and that in firing they executed each other.

Because, in his judgment, "the action of the commanding officer was most reprehensible" (Eastman, 39), Miles relieved Colonel Forsyth of his command. However, he was soon vindicated by Redfield Proctor, Secretary of War, acting on official testimony presented to him, and the recommendation of Major General Schofield. In his directive of February 12, 1891, Proctor finds that the Indians were desperadoes bent upon a destructive raid upon the settlements, that they attacked en masse, killing many of their own people, as well as soldiers then mingling with women and children, to the detriment of the latter. In the confusion it was difficult to distinguish buck from squaw. Some women and children were unavoidably killed and wounded, "a fact universal regretted by the 7th Cavalry..." However, several instances (not specified) of humanity in the saving of women and children were noted. Not a single man of the command was killed by his fellows. The arrangement of the troops does not require adverse criticism on the part of the War Department (cited by McCormick).

Since Proctor's pronouncement, the War Department has stoutly and consistently denied that there was any massacre. Officially it was an honorable wartime engagement. It was no ordinary engagement however. It was a battle of heroic proportions, in the Army's view. The Medal of Honor, the highest award for valor this nation can bestow, was received by no less than eighteen soldier participants in the fight at "Wounded Knee Creek." The citations ring with such phrases as the following: "twice voluntarily rescued wounded comrades under fire of the enemy; distinguished gallantry; bravery in action; killed a hostile Indian at close quarters," etc., (Medal of Honor). This medal was distributed somewhat more generously on this occasion than was the custom during World Wars I and II.

Just one point remains. Senator Case is convinced that the "massacre" was motivated by a desire on the part of the 7th Cavalry to avenge its defeat of 1876 at the Battle of the Little Big Horn. Mooney suggests no such thing, and of course it is not to be found in official accounts. Neither does it appear in any of the affidavits of the Indian survivors (McGregor). The revenge motive is suggested by Wellman (236-7)-- "It was what the 7th Cavalry was waiting for. This was too good a chance to miss". It is asserted by Eastman -- "Custer's old command had a grudge to repay" -- to account for the seemingly wanton killing of innocents. This allegation, however, seems actually theory rather than a statement of fact. One unidentified officer is reported to have said, "Now we have avenged Custer's death," in a statement of

the Rev. C. S. Cook, a half breed clergyman of the Episcopal Church, made at a hearing in Washington, D. C., February, 1891 (Wellman, 237). Outside of this one bit of third hand evidence, who can say what went on in the minds of the 7th Cavalrymen at dawn of December 29, 1890? There is no evidence of a sinister plot by either party; but it is not unlikely that at this little Armageddon of the Red Man the ghosts of several old fallen heroes stalked somberly - not only Custer, but also Fetterman, Grattan, Little Thunder, Crazy Horse, and Sitting Bull.

### III. Park Data

#### A. Ownership

About 20 acres fall within the area tentatively recommended by the committee of July 30. Of these, 5 acres are owned by Mr. Clyde Gildersleeve, merchant of Wounded Knee, who has made a public offer to donate. The remaining 15 acres are owned by the Pine Ridge Educational Society, a Catholic organization. Reverend Fuller, President of the Society, has indicated in a letter of September 16 to us, a willingness to donate or sell at merely nominal cost. Those portions of adjacent lands that are important to an interpretation of the battle, particularly the ravine and the mass grave, could be protected by cooperative agreements with other land owners, principally the Catholic Church and Indian allottees (see Maps).

#### B. Appraised Value

The lands in question are useful only for limited grazing, but because of their location in the Wounded Knee community might have potential value for residential use. No expert appraisal of the land value was obtained, in view of the donation offers. However, it is believed that the present value of this land would be in the neighborhood of \$15 to \$25 per acre.

#### C. Condition of Lands

The lands embraced within the tentatively proposed area are clear of improvements, except for cattle fences and a graveled road at the east end (see Maps and Photos).

#### D. Accessibility

U. S. Highway 18 is a high standard oil-surfaced road, but the stretch of 8 miles leading north to the battlefield (or "scene of the massacre") is narrow, rutty, and only thinly surfaced with gravel. Clouds of dust trail the traveler in fair weather. After rain it is reputed to be passable only with difficulty. Much complaint about the condition of this road is now voiced by local residents. It is reasonably certain that establishment of a national site would accentuate the demands for road improvement by the Federal Government. The Bureau of Indian Affairs is presently responsible for the maintenance of this road, but has no prospect of funds for improvement.

#### E. Suggested Development

If the site were to be established as a national historic site in non-federal ownership, it would be sufficient to provide suitable signs and markers, with little recurring cost to the Government. However in federal ownership, if handled in a manner similar to existing national monuments, Wounded Knee would conceivably require a substantial physical improvement program and sizeable recurring annual appropriations. Because of the indefiniteness of the proposal, no attempt is made here to estimate these costs, or the cost of improving the approach road.

#### F. Relation to National Park Service Areas

Wounded Knee would fit administratively into the constellation of Black Hills Areas (Wind Cave, Mount Rushmore, Badlands, Devils Tower,

Jewel Cave) administered by a coordinating superintendent stationed at Rapid City.

There are two areas now in the National Park System which are related to Plains Indian warfare--Custer Battlefield National Monument, scene of the Battle of the Little Big Horn of June 25-26, 1876; and Fort Laramie National Monument, where remains of the important military post of 1849-1890 are preserved. Both areas are related in some degree to Wounded Knee. Fort Laramie was a common gathering place for the Sioux (particularly the Oglalas and Brules) when the North Platte Valley was their habitat, before their final move (in 1871) to the Pine Ridge country. The bloody affair of the Little Big Horn is generally considered the climactic battle of Plains Indian warfare, a Pyrrhic victory for the Sioux which precipitated their final subjugation, the trail which ended forever at Wounded Knee.

Indian warfare (but not of "the Plains") is the theme at one other area in Region Two--Big Hole Battlefield National Monument, in western Montana.

Badlands National Monument in South Dakota is the nearest existing area of the Service to Wounded Knee. Big Foot's band crossed this area on its flight from Cheyenne River before capture by the 7th Cavalry.

### G. Related Historic Sites

Within the Pine Ridge Reservation there are no other important historic sites in any way designated. Pine Ridge itself is of considerable historic interest because of its key role in the reservation history of the Oglala Sioux. This reservation is one of the largest and most heavily populated of the Indian reservations and the Sioux (partly because of their historic prowess as warriors) are popularly regarded as among the most colorful American Indians. At Pine Ridge, which is somewhat larger than the typical agency, there is, in addition to the government plant, a large industrial school and a handicrafts shop and museum. The site of the home of Red Cloud, famous war chief of the Oglalas (who offered only passive resistance during the Wounded Knee disturbance) is the only historic feature marked.

The State of South Dakota has historic markers at the sites of the battlefields of Slim Buttes (1876) and Whitestone Hill (1865) and at the Ree Village on the Missouri River besieged by Leavenworth in 1823, but there are no markers at Wounded Knee.

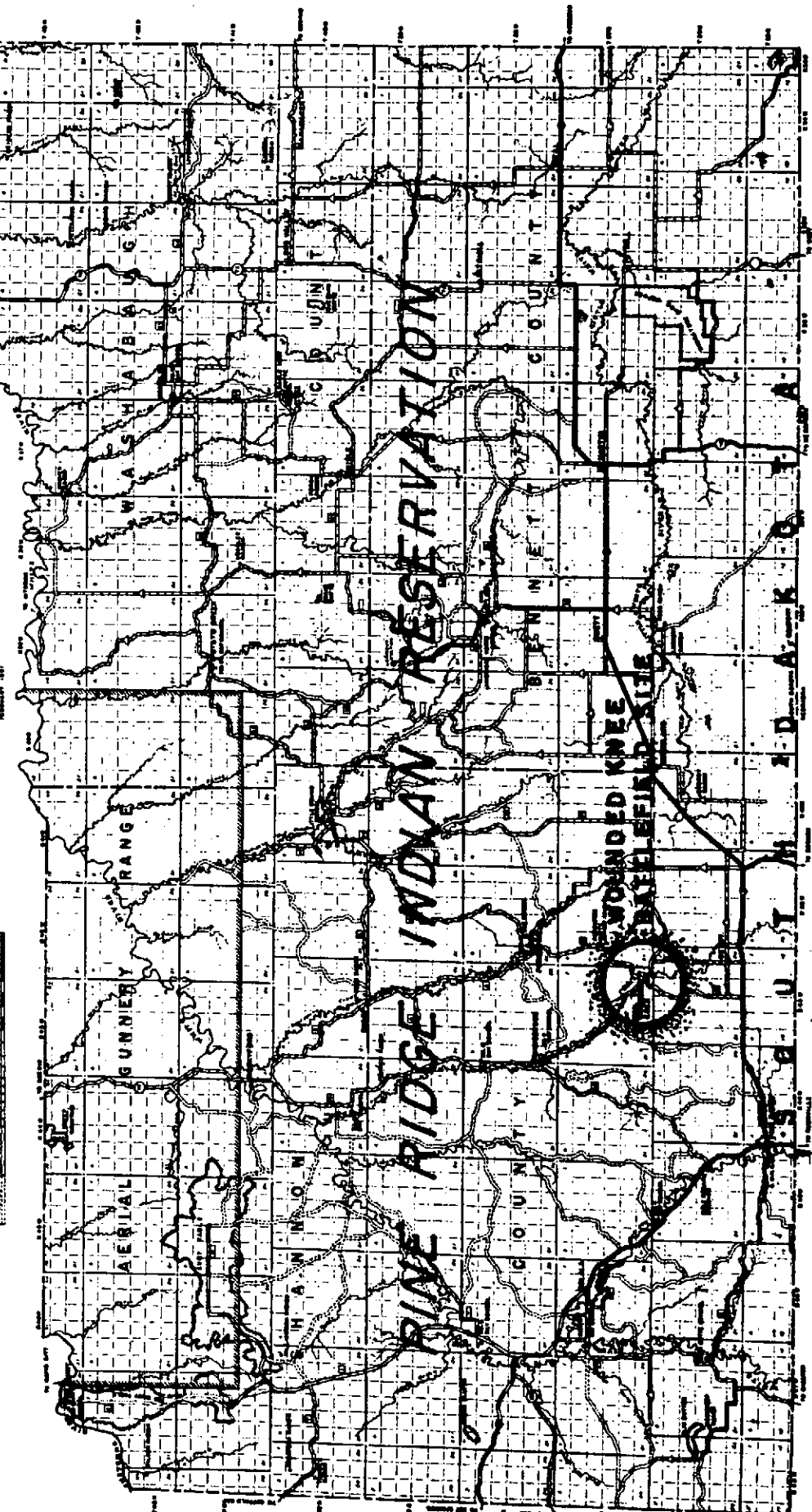
Notice should be given here to the abortive Sioux Indian Memorial proposed in the 1930's by citizens of Chadron, Nebraska, for location in Chadron State Park; and to the current project privately promoted by the sculptor Zielkowski (with encouragement from Senator Case and State Historian Robinson) for a gigantic mountain statue of Crazy Horse, near Custer, South Dakota, as a memorial to the heroic Sioux warrior who was the archetype of the wild American Indians.



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
 OFFICE OF INDIAN AFFAIRS  
 BRANCH OF ROADS  
 PINE RIDGE AGENCY - SOUTH DAKOTA  
 PINE RIDGE INDIAN RESERVATION  
 ONE A. LARSON, SUPERINTENDENT  
 S. S. BELLEF, ROAD ENGINEER  
 S. S. BELLEF, ROAD ENGINEER  
 S. S. BELLEF, ROAD ENGINEER  
 FEBRUARY, 1952

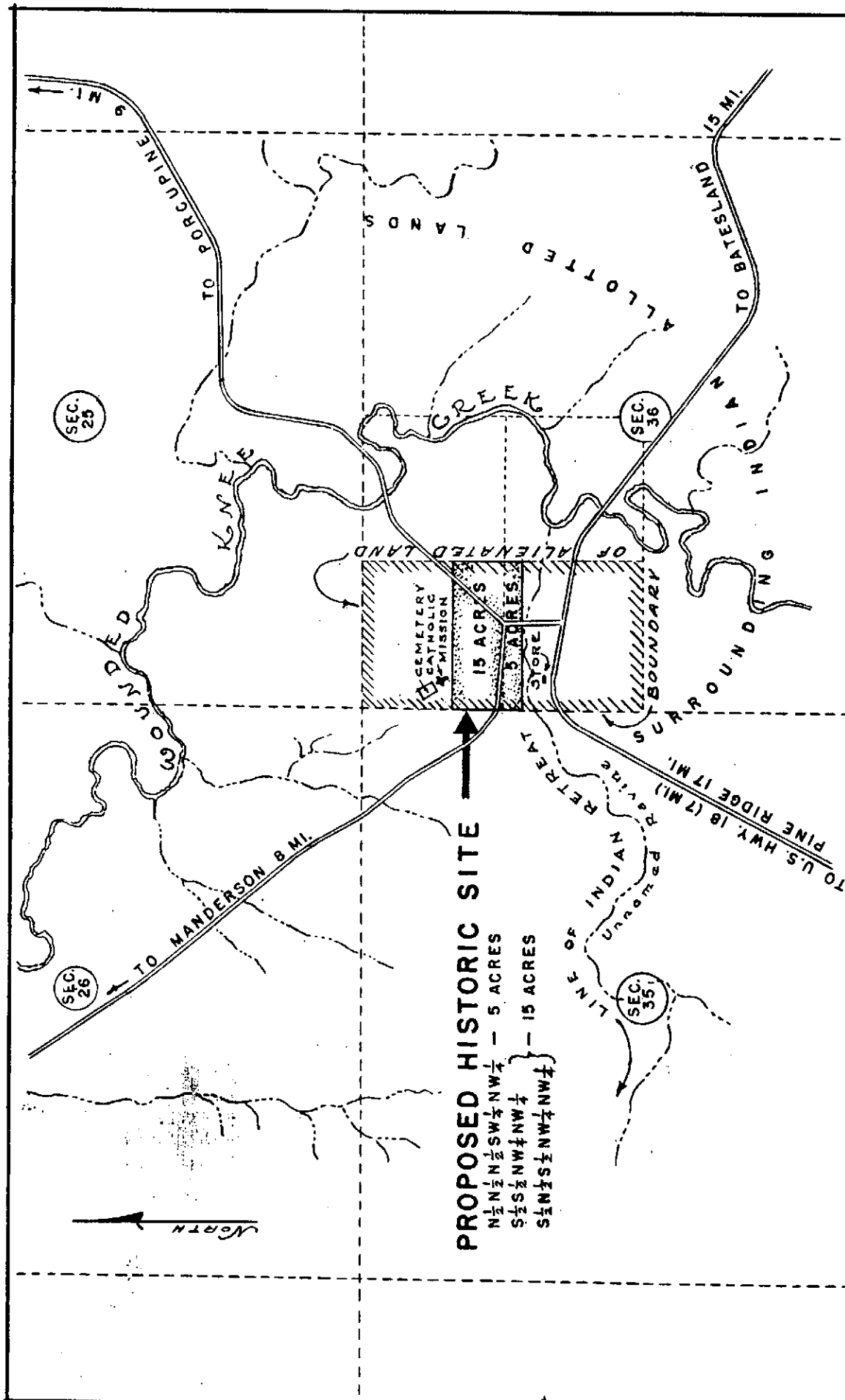
LEGEND  
 AIRMAIL ROUTE MARK  
 STATE HIGHWAY  
 COUNTY ROAD  
 FEDERAL ROAD  
 RAILROAD  
 CANAL  
 RIVER  
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 SWAMP  
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 UNDEVELOPED LAND  
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SCALE BAR  
 STATE HIGHWAY  
 COUNTY ROAD  
 FEDERAL ROAD  
 RAILROAD  
 CANAL  
 RIVER  
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 CREEK  
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 SWAMP  
 WETLAND  
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 GENERAL AREA SKETCH  
 1:75,000



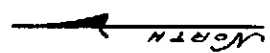
N E B R A S S A

VICINITY MAP  
 WOUNDED KNEE BATTLEFIELD  
 SCALE - 1 INCH = 10 MILES  
 OCTOBER, 1952



LOCATION MAP  
**WOUNDED KNEE BATTLEFIELD**  
 SCALE - 4 INCHES = 1 MILE  
 OCTOBER, 1952

**PROPOSED HISTORIC SITE**  
 N $\frac{1}{2}$ N $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$  - 5 ACRES  
 S $\frac{1}{2}$ N $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$  - 5 ACRES  
 S $\frac{1}{2}$ S $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$  - 15 ACRES

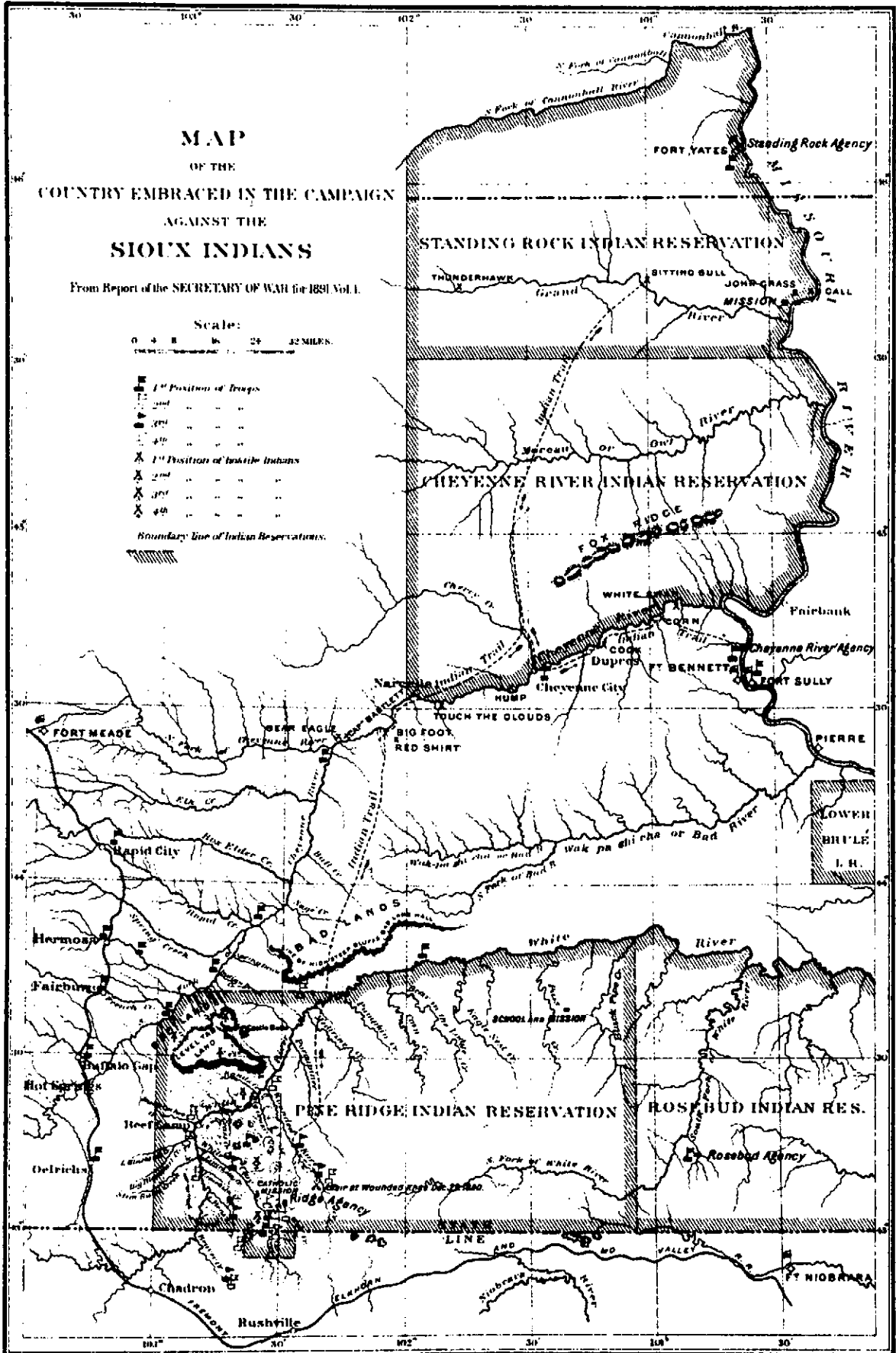


**MAP**  
 OF THE  
 COUNTRY EMBRACED IN THE CAMPAIGN  
 AGAINST THE  
**SIoux INDIANS**

From Report of the SECRETARY OF WAR for 1891 Vol. I.

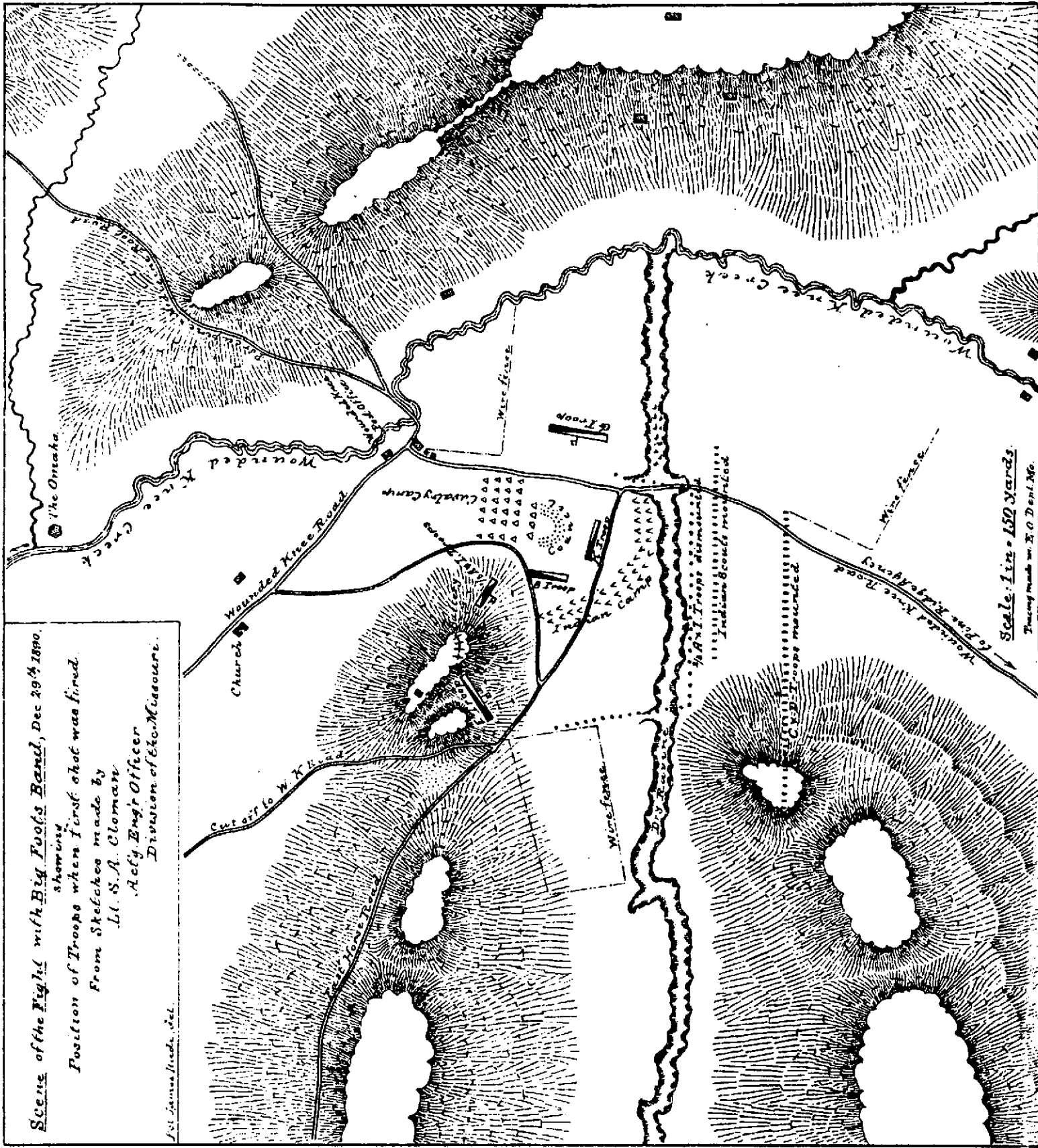
Scale:  
 0 4 8 12 16 20 24 28 32 MILES.

- 1<sup>st</sup> Position of Troops
- 2<sup>nd</sup> " " " "
- 3<sup>rd</sup> " " " "
- △ 4<sup>th</sup> " " " "
- ✕ 1<sup>st</sup> Position of hostile Indians
- ✕ 2<sup>nd</sup> " " " "
- ✕ 3<sup>rd</sup> " " " "
- ✕ 4<sup>th</sup> " " " "
- ▨ Boundary Line of Indian Reservations.



Scene of the Fight with Big Foot's Band, Dec 29<sup>th</sup> 1890.  
 showing  
 Position of Troops when first shot was fired.  
 From Sketches made by  
 Lt. S. A. Cloman  
 Acty. Engr. Officer  
 Division of Geo. Missouri.

1st James/Trade, Del.



Scale: 1 in = 100 Yards  
 Tracing made by E. O. Dent, Jr.



Photo No. 1

Panoramic view of Wounded Knee Battlefield area, looking west. Wounded Knee Creek in foreground. Number key: (1) Road to Pine Ridge Agency; (2) Present store and post office; (3) Mouth of fatal ravine; (4) Camp and battlefield area; (5) Hill where Hotchkiss guns were emplaced, now occupied by mission and mass grave; and (6) Site of old post office.

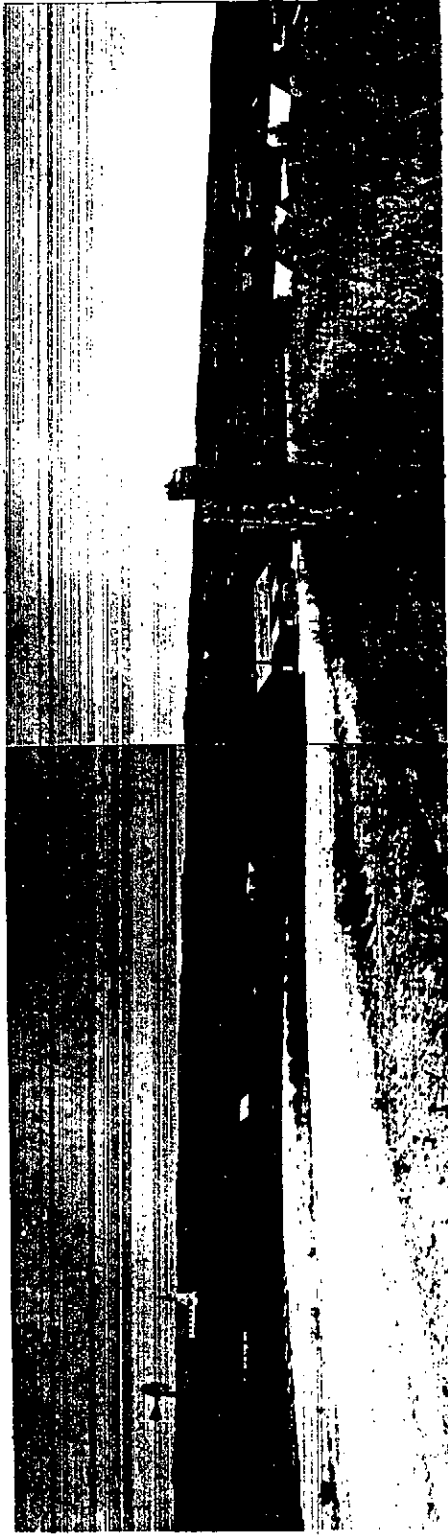


Photo No. 2

Panoramic view of Wounded Knee Battlefield area looking north and northeast. Principal action on flat between windmill and mission building. Wounded Knee store and post office in middle foreground. Wounded Knee Creek, middle distance. Photo No. 1 taken from elevation at extreme right.



Photo No. 3  
Wounded Knee Battlefield. View to southeast toward  
Catholic Mission on hill where Hotchkiss guns were  
emplaced. Soldier camp and principal action at left,  
middle distance.



Photo No. 4

Mass grave behind the Catholic Mission where Indian victims of Wounded Knee were buried on January 1, 1891.



Photo No. 5

"Committee" at Wounded Knee monument, July 30, 1952. Left to right: Jake Herman, Oglala Sioux Council; Father Fuller, Holy Rosary Mission; Charles Blindman, President, Wounded Knee survivors Association; Matthew High Pine, Wounded Knee; William Fire Thunder, Oglala Sioux Council; Clive Gildersleeve, Wounded Knee; Will H. Spindler, Wounded Knee; Samuel Stands, Oglala Sioux Council.





Photo No. 6

Pine Ridge, South Dakota, agency for the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, 17 miles by present road from Wounded Knee. Pine Ridge was the center of military operations during the "Ghost Dance War."

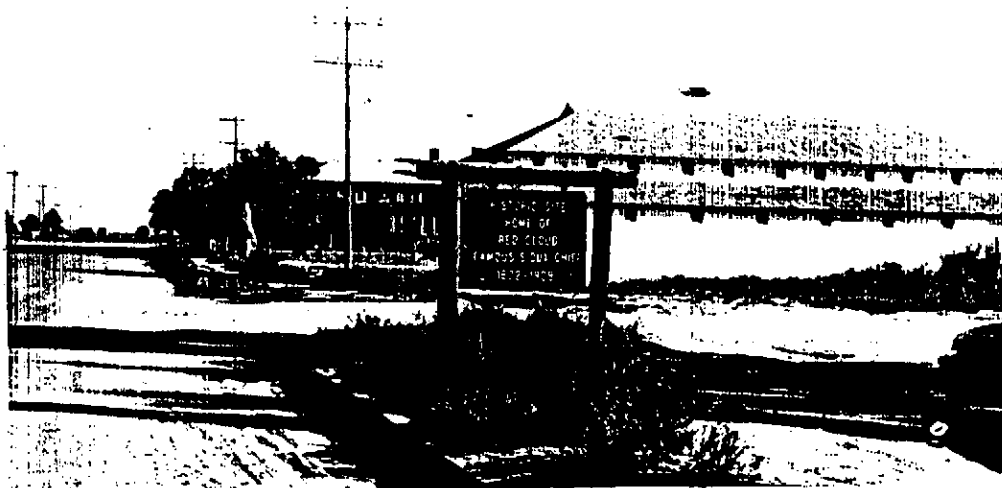


Photo No. 7

Historic site in Pine Ridge. The agency police station now occupies the site. Red Cloud was a great war chief of the Oglalas but was not actively hostile at the time of Wounded Knee. In background is American Legion Hall, scene of the July 29 meeting.



Photo No. 8

Supt. E. S. Luce, Custer Battlefield National Monument, identifies four of these figures as follows: Seated--Major Samuel M. Whit-side (left); Colonel James W. Forsyth (center). Standing--1st Lieut. John C. Gresham (second from right); 1st Lieut. William J. Nicholson (third from right).



Photo No. 9

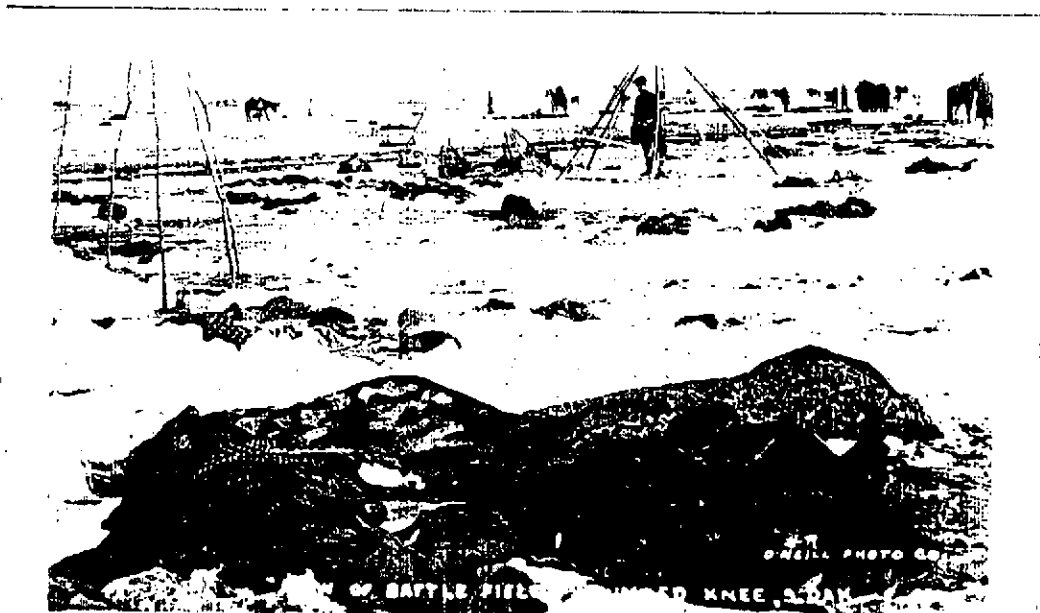


Photo No. 10



Photo No. 11



Photo No. 12



Photo No. 13

## V. Conclusions

We are now in a position to summarize the points having a bearing on the question of national significance.

1. Research fails to disclose any sites to contest the claim that Wounded Knee was the last important clash between red men and white on the North American continent.

2. Research also suggests that in number of fatalities it was probably the bloodiest engagement in the annals of Plains Indian warfare (between 300-330). The only rival in this respect was the Battle of the Little Big Horn, with 263 of Custer's forces dead (according to Superintendent Luce), an indeterminate number of Indians killed.

3. The highly controversial aspects of Wounded Knee reflect not only gross discrepancies in the evidence but passions engendered by personal tragedy, group loyalties, and a certain amount of free-floating moral sentiment. While obscuring the search for facts, these verbal projections of the battle have kept Wounded Knee vividly alive through the decades. If the climax of the tragedy was played at the Little Big Horn, the final ineradicable agonizing scene before ringing down the curtain, the denouement of the bitter centuries-old racial conflict, was played at Wounded Knee.

4. In a literal sense, Wounded Knee, the disastrous but probably preventable upshot of a disturbance brought on by religious mania, was itself only an incident without historical import or effect

beyond the shock to the Indian and to whites alike, with resultant improvement (some say only temporary) in the handling of contemporary Indian affairs, and the enrichment of romantic literature (see Neihardt's "Song of the Messiah").

5. In a wider sense, Wounded Knee is highly symbolic and therein lies, in the opinion of this reporter, its strongest claim to national recognition. In the blood-bath of Wounded Knee the era of aboriginal revolt came to a tragic and devastating finish, the era of peaceful racial relations began. Since 1891, despite great cultural barriers, friendship has prevailed. Young men of the Sioux, descendants of proud nomadic eagle-plumed warriors, have since acquitted themselves with conspicuous gallantry in the Spanish-American War, World Wars I and II, and in Korea. Wounded Knee, the place where ancient animosities held their last violent sway, is also a milestone in the history of race relations, demonstrating the futility of settling racial arguments by combat, and the urgent need for acceptance of social responsibility.

6. If Wounded Knee is considered to have merit as an appropriate site for a monument commemorating the era of peaceful relations between red man and white, the question might logically arise, why select an event related to the Sioux Indians and lying within a Sioux reservation, instead of selecting a site which might be more nearly commemorative of all Indian tribes. No historic site which would logically represent all American Indian tribes is known to this

reporter. On the other hand, two considerations suggest the logic of selecting a site on a Sioux Indian Reservation as representative of Indians generally. First, the Sioux were the last important group of aboriginal people to offer powerful resistance to conquest by the white race. Secondly, the Sioux peoples comprise the largest homogeneous linguistic group of Indians in the United States. In many ways the Sioux Indian has become the prototype of all American Indians in the minds of the average American. Thus, it would not be illogical to establish a commemorative site on a Sioux Reservation to represent all Indian tribes.

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October 3, 1952

Cleared for Distribution

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